

# Glendale considers expanding council to 7

## Issue could go to voters next year. Officials also looking into moving elections to November.

*BY ARIN MIKAILIAN*

Almost four months after voters overwhelmingly rejected a move to split the community into voting districts, Glendale officials are looking into expanding the City Council from five to seven at-large members and moving municipal elections to November.

Measure D, which would have amended the city's charter, was placed on the ballot in April after an attorney threatened to sue the city, saying that its at-large system violated state law and suppressed Latino representation on the council. The measure was defeated by a nearly 2-to-1 margin.

The council was scheduled to consider the expansion and election issues last week, but ended up postponing its decision because of a state bill that's headed to Gov. Jerry Brown's desk for his approval.

The bill, which has already won legislative support, would require cities to consolidate their elections with state general elections in the fall, meaning the city could no longer have elections in April.

But the question of whether to expand the council could go before local voters as early as November 2016, if the current council agrees at an upcoming meeting.

Part of what's driving the issue is whether to follow the model of other cities such as neighboring Pasadena, which has a smaller

population than Glendale, but has seven council members and an elected mayor, City Atty. Michael Garcia wrote in a city staff report.

“Reasons for increasing the size of the City Council include increasing the City Council’s capacity to serve Glendale residents and providing more access to council members for Glendale residents,” he wrote.

In the same staff report, Garcia referenced a December 2013 letter from attorney Kevin Shenkman, who threatened the city with litigation if it didn’t transition to a district voting system. The Glendale Unified School District has already been sued by Shenkman, and the Glendale Community College’s Board of Trustees has voted to switch to a district system.

Having districts would mean a single council member would represent a specific geographic area of the city instead of the entire community. All current members of the council live north of Glenoaks Boulevard and south of the 210 (Foothill) Freeway.

Resident Brian Ellis, who wrote the arguments against Measure D in the April ballot, said he doesn’t believe a larger council is necessary.

“Staff repeatedly references the letter a litigation-happy lawyer sent regarding the style and form of our elections,” he said. “Until a suit is actually filed — and based on the legal opinions we heard earlier this year, there may be no basis for such a suit. It is disingenuous to continue using this as a threat.”

Garcia has noted that Latinos make up only about 17% of Glendale’s population, and that representatives — such as Gus Gomez and Rick Reyes — have been elected to the council.

But City Manager Scott Ochoa said the city doesn't live in a vacuum and can't ignore the district issues that the community college and the school district are facing.

"I would like to think we don't tack policy direction based on potential lawsuits," he said. "I think if the council wants to move in that direction, it's the right thing to do and that's going to be the determining factor overall."

If local voters approved a charter amendment to expand the council, the body would get two extra members starting with the November 2018 race.

In addition, Garcia said council members whose terms would expire in April 2017 would be continued to Nov. 28, and those set to expire in April 2019 would be extended to November 2020. [arin.mikailian@latimes.com](mailto:arin.mikailian@latimes.com) Arin Mikailian writes for Times Community News.